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CRITICAL NOTICES.

LAZARUS'S "ETHICS OF JUDAISM."

"Die Ethik des Judenthums," von M. LAZARUS. Frankfurt, 1898.

PROFESSOR LAZARUS has crowned a long career devoted to the higher thought, by his treatise on Jewish Ethics—a subject most difficult to deal with adequately, yet calling imperatively for adequate treatment in these days when everything Jewish has been made the subject of attack. Professor Lazarus emphasizes in his Preface the fact that he has not written with any apologetic tendency, but the fact remains that a clear and sympathetic presentation of the principles of Jewish ethics forms the best defence for Judaism, and in reality Professor Lazarus deals, though in a positive manner, with most of the objections that have been brought against Jewish ethical principles. It will therefore form an armoury for the defenders of the faith, and must for a long time be the model on the lines of which any treatment of Jewish ethics must proceed.

The task which Professor Lazarus had before him was, indeed, one of appalling difficulty; one can quite understand how it has taken him fifteen years to produce even this first volume. The difficulty and the danger of the problem he had before him is sufficiently indicated in the elaborate first chapter, on the Sources of Jewish Ethics. Professor Lazarus rightly points out that there has never been any systematic attempt to formulate the principles of Jewish ethics, and, consequently, they have to be reconstituted from their concrete examples, rather than from any deliberate and conscious statement of them. He further points out, moreover, that we cannot merely take the Bible, or the Talmud, or even the whole Jewish ethical literature, as the basis of the treatment: the prayers, the poems, the communal institutions, the customs, and even the legends, have to be searched for evidence of ethical peculiarities in the Jewish race. What does this mean? It means simply that Jewish ethics is still alive, still adapting itself to its environment, yet still preserving

continuity with its older self in Biblical and Talmudical times, so that to describe its morphology one has to investigate its whole life-history. What that means, in the case of a national existence lasting over three thousand years, and changing its environment and even its inner constitution definitely, if slowly, any person conversant with the outlines of Jewish history can guess, but only Professor Lazarus can know. That he has, notwithstanding all these difficulties, yet succeeded in bringing out into prominence the ruling principles which underlie all these manifold and varying phenomena, is little less than a triumph of philosophic skill.

The question the critic has to ask is whether, in reducing Jewish ethics from an organism to a system, Professor Lazarus is still enabled to retain the vital principles. One feels a certain difficulty in deciding upon this crucial point, owing to the somewhat remarkable form into which Professor Lazarus has thrown his results. To put the matter shortly, he has endeavoured to make the Bible and Talmud speak in the terminology of Kant. He is concerned to say that Jewish ethics is autonomous, not heteronomous; that the categorical imperative is shown in the last clause of Deut. xxii. 3, and that the aim of Jewish morality is eudaemonistic rather than utilitarian. Let me hasten to add that Professor Lazarus, one of the masters of German style, has by no means put his results in such cacophonous phrases, but the fact remains that the problems he discusses, and the forms in which he discusses them, are dictated by the technicalities of Kant's Theory of Ethics. No student of the history of ethics can be unaware of the nobility of tone displayed by Kant in the most constructive portion of his philosophy, nor of the important influence that it has had upon more recent speculation; but, after all, his was a critical philosophy; he was concerned more with the fundamental and epistemological groundwork than with the more human superstructure, and the consequence is that Professor Lazarus, in following him, has produced rather *prolegomena* to any future system of Jewish ethics than a Jewish ethics itself—or at least let me qualify this by saying that his present volume consists of *prolegomena*, and that we are promised, in the second volume, the actual details of Jewish ethics, of which a very appetizing *aperçu* is given at the end of the Table of Contents in the present work.

If one could sum up so large and so closely reasoned a volume in a formula, one might perhaps say that in Professor Lazarus's view the two fundamental conceptions of Jewish ethics are Unity and Sociality. According to him, this unity is seen in the Jewish conception, not alone of God, but of nature and of humanity. It is easy for him to show (with half an eye, perhaps, to Anti-Semitic attacks), that even in

the Rabbinic period God was consistently regarded as the God of all mankind, and not alone the God of Israel. The unity of God involves the unity of humanity. Nature, again, is one in the Jewish conception, and not divided up into a hierarchy of natural forces, each of which could be worshipped, as in the idolatries of the ancient world. But there is a further aspect in which Nature, though one, is opposed to humanity, in the sense of being the environment and the object of the latter. In itself, Nature is non-moral, and when it comes into the moral sphere it is only as acted upon by human beings. Professor Lazarus gives a curious turn to a Midrashic gloss on Solomon's saying, "There is nothing new under the sun"—"not *under* the sun, but *above* the sun"—i.e. in the spiritual sphere. Again, to use the Kantian terminology, man makes Nature, though he does not create it. All this is very subtle, but I venture to doubt whether we can attribute an anticipation of Kant to the Midrashic sages.

In the sixth chapter of the present volume—one of the most original in it—Professor Lazarus explains from his standpoint the attitude of Jews towards the physical world. He points out that none of the moral laws of the Bible is limited to the Holy Land—in other words, that, regarded ethically, no land can be holy. The curious statement of the Midrash that every man should regard himself as if the world had been created for him, is interpreted by Professor Lazarus in such a manner as to throw light upon the Jewish conception of the existence of evil: natural ills exist so that moral excellences can remedy them. Pain and sorrow thus obtain their ethical worth, and the martyr becomes the highest ethical triumph of humanity since he overcomes the world. Judaism does not regard the senses as the opponents of morality, but the sins, like pride, envy, and so on. There is no opposition of soul and body in Judaism; Satan, evil desire, and the Angel of Death, are one and the same, according to Rabbi Levi. Hence joy is natural and praiseworthy; there is no pessimism in Judaism, though there may be asceticism, which only carries into practice the principle that spiritual joys are higher than corporeal. This joyfulness of the Jewish ideal is insisted upon to the end of the chapter, in which it is pointed out that amusements are part of the moral life. The Sabbath is not a "Judaic" one, but the day on which man has a double soul. Judaism knows nothing of original sin; it places all the good things of life upon a higher plane.

I have somewhat anticipated in dealing with this chapter, but it lends itself to a clearer and more rapid summary than most of the others, and, accordingly, forms an admirable example of the originality

and penetrating insight of Professor Lazarus's treatment, while at the same time it shows what a broad view he takes of his subject.

Reverting, however, to the earlier sections, one may stop for a moment at the fundamental difficulty of Jewish ethics—its interpenetration by theology. The Good is God's command: we seem therefore hedged in a vicious logical circle, since when we ask, What does God command? we are obliged to answer, The Good. Professor Lazarus, however, points out, as has been done by others, that while the ethical Law and the divine commands are inseparable, they are not necessarily identical. A thing is not good because it is commanded, it is commanded because it is good. The ethical is the norm, by which we judge the divine. Professor Lazarus does not discuss the further difficulty to which this leads, which we may perhaps put in a phrase borrowed from Mr. Whistler—Why drag in the Divine? The whole Ethical Society movement takes its ground on this divorce of ethics and theology, and it would have been interesting to know from Professor Lazarus on what lines Jewish ethics defends its dependence on, or alliance with, theology. Perhaps the solution is to be found in the point made so consistently by Professor Lazarus, that the aim of the Jewish moralist, as such, is to become holy, i. e. to become like to God in those ethical qualities which constitute His nature.

After dealing in the First Book with the sources, the principles, and the character of Jewish ethics, Professor Lazarus devotes the second half to the Aim of Ethics, which he sums up in the phrase, "The Hallowing of Life" (*Heiligung des Lebens*). To sum up his argument here is even more difficult than in the earlier part, but the headings of the three chief chapters of the second part will perhaps serve to indicate the outlines—"Holiness is Ethicality" (*Versittlichung*), "Ethicality is Legality," "Holiness as Communion" (Chaps. iv, v, and vii). These titles, in our inadequate English version, indicate the chief topics of the more constructive part of Professor Lazarus's treatise. He had been previously concerned to prove that the moral Law in Judaism is an end in itself, is thus autonomous, in the Kantian phrase, that the Kantian requirement, that the only good thing is the Good Will, is entirely fulfilled by Jewish ethics, in which the moral Law is free and independent, and not determined (as is so often said) by the consideration of rewards and punishments. The well-known saying of Antigonus of Socho, "Be not as servants, serving for a reward," is here pressed, as usual, to do yeoman's service. But morality being the supreme thing in itself, what are its means? That is the question Professor Lazarus has to answer in the Second Part. His answer, in short, is, To make life holy is to make it moral.

Now holiness is either of ceremonial or of character, and it has always been an objection to the Law that it lays so much stress upon ceremonial holiness. It has usually been claimed to be the great advance of Christianity upon Judaism that it diverted the stress of morality from ceremonial to character. Without taking note of this claim, or of the second objection, Professor Lazarus is concerned to show that it is only as a preparation and a symbol of holiness of character that ceremonial holiness takes its place in moral paedagogics. Here the interpenetration of morality by theology effects the required union: the holiness of God is the link between the holiness of the ceremonial and the holiness of the worshipper. There is no contrast between the ceremonial and the ethical holiness, because without the latter, the former would have no meaning. Yet the ethical is raised to a higher power by the religious, which is expressed in Judaism by the notion of the Holiness of the Name (קדוש השם). Here Professor Lazarus puts in the significant and light-giving remark, that the idea that God can be hallowed is the noblest idea in Judaism and in all religion. The Sabbath, of course, is the type of both ceremonial and ethical holiness, and it would be needless to urge the point how completely the Sabbath confirms the unity of the two conceptions. Yet the difficulty remains that only God is holy; man cannot be holy, though he can aim to *become* so. From this Professor Lazarus draws the interesting conclusion that the ethical aim in Judaism is not the holiness of the Jew, but the holiness of life in general. In this way holiness becomes a sort of plan for the whole life, and binds it together by a sort of natural piety. The Good thus becomes not an act but a property of character, and the conclusion is come to that man must become good, that he may do good.

In all this Professor Lazarus is implicitly answering the objection to Jewish ethics, that it lays so much stress upon the good action, and so little upon the good motive. As will have been seen from the preceding analysis, he altogether denies this, and insists that the central motive of Jewish ethics is the holy character, not the holy act. But surely something may be said even in defence of the stress undoubtedly laid by Jewish practice upon holy actions. As I have elsewhere put it, it is mainly a question of paedagogics: Christian ethics says, Feel good, and you will do good; Jewish ethics (as I interpret it) rather says, Do good, and you will come to feel good. If that is applied to child life, surely experience is in favour of the latter plan. And, talking of plan, one of the most interesting points in the whole book is the conception it contains of life in the Jewish idea being regarded as a whole, and ethics as a plan for its

intricate course. From the rapid sketch given of the promised second volume, it is clear that this conception of a plan will form one of its main ideas.

Turning on to the chapter headed by the almost untranslatable sentence, "Versittlichung ist Gesetzlichkeit"—which answers, perhaps, to the idea which I have in my "Jewish Ideals" called "Morality as Law"—Professor Lazarus connects his conception with his ruling idea of holiness somewhat in the following way. The essence of ethicality (*Versittlichung*) is to act according to the norm of the Law; the essence of such action is obedience—obedience to God in religion, obedience to the moral Law in ethics—and the aim of this obedience is in order to become holy. The Law enables the Jew to treat life as a whole, and thus constitutes that plan which it is the essence of morality to supply to life. Here Professor Lazarus has implicitly to meet the objection that the Law is given from the outside, and is mainly negative. To the latter objection he answers that a negative precept must be regarded as a positive action: to refrain from sin is to do something, and here for once in a way he brings in his wide psychological knowledge, and points out that restraint means what the physiologists call inhibition. As regards the externality of legalism, Professor Lazarus points to such sayings as that of Rabbi Chanina—that the man who fulfils the Law when he is not obliged to do so, is greater than he who fulfils it when he is obliged—as proving that the inner feeling is the determining motive. As in the realm of religion feeling is everything, so in ethics (p. 230), because feeling is the bridge between idea and reality; and here again Professor Lazarus stands firmly upon a sound psychological basis. It is accordingly from this feeling that the moral merit of actions is to be judged; acts and deeds obtain their value from the love from which they spring (p. 232). Professor Lazarus quotes the words of Rabbi Eleasar to this effect in *Succa*, 49 b. It is characteristic of Professor Lazarus's treatment throughout that he illustrates almost all his points by similar quotations, which are generally discussed at greater length in his very valuable Appendix. In the present instance he is straightforward enough to point out that Rashi gives a different interpretation of Rabbi Eleasar's remarks.

The final chapter deals with "Holiness as Communion" (*Heiligung als Vereinigung*). It is in this chapter that he lays stress on the Jewish ideal, that ethics is essentially social. Robinson Crusoe could not have been holy, that is, of course if he had been born on the island. Here Professor Lazarus makes use of his distinction between ceremonial and ethical holiness: the priest was ritually holy; the whole people was holy ethically. Here we have one of the few

instances in which Professor Lazarus uses the ethical systems of other nations to point his contrasts: the Greek aim was individualistic; the individual was an end in himself; not so in Israel, for whom the aim was to be a holy people, not a nation of holy persons. The communal responsibility of each for all and all for each is thus characteristic of Judaism, and here our author, as is usual with him, points to the characteristic trait in Jewish custom, that all communal matters are to be done in the Name of God, i.e. not for personal ends. He subtly connects his principle with the continuity of Jewish tradition, and even with the experience of Jewish martyrdom. The Jewish community was bound together, not alone by the bond of common action, but by the memory of common suffering; every insult hurled at us tends thus to give Israel a closer bond of union. Translated into the language of to-day, Anti-Semitism helps to keep Judaism alive. The type of this communion is in the family, and here Professor Lazarus has a remarkable point to make. The love of parents for their children is natural—common to all animals, but the love of children for their parents is ethical; hence in the Law we do not find parents commanded to love their children, no more than they are commanded to breathe in the air. Even in the most personal part of a man's life, viz. his work, the personal limit is overcome; a man works for the world, not for himself, or else he would starve. The chapter and the book are concluded by a fine passage on justice as the essence of communion, which has almost a topical interest at the present moment, while Professor Lazarus goes on to point out that justice has to be tempered with mercy and beneficence, for which Judaism makes so elaborate a provision. Sociality is thus the essence of communion, as that again is the essence of holiness. It is needless to add that throughout the book Professor Lazarus has been at pains to prove that Judaism does not limit its social sentiment to Jews alone, but extends it to humanity at large.

It has been impossible in this rough sketch of the main lines of Professor Lazarus's epoch-making treatise to do justice to the many brilliant and illuminating ideas on special topics of ethical interest with which it abounds. It is a book, indeed, difficult to criticize because of its very brilliance, which at times produces a certain effect of discontinuity in the treatment. Only one point I will endeavour to make against the general conception. As was perhaps natural from a distinguished member of the Reform movement in Germany, Professor Lazarus, though he recognizes the force of tradition and traditionalism in Judaism—no one could fail to recognize that,—does not sufficiently (to my mind) recognize the historical basis of

Jewish ethics—the conception that a Jew's good deed goes towards a great storehouse of Israel's good deeds,—that there is continuity in the national life, and that that national life is the norm and type of the holy. I have elsewhere called this conception the *Hallowing of History*, and it is chiefly the absence of this conception which enables me to indulge in even the slightest criticism on Professor Lazarus's work. Even this, however, may be premature ; his second volume is still to come, and I observe that he is to deal there with the *Messianic Hope*, so closely connected with the conception of the hallowing of history. Perhaps the best criticism one can make of the present volume is that it makes one long for its successor.

Before parting, however, from it, there is one topic which fails to appear, and yet seems to call for treatment by the very title. Abstract theoretic ethics is universalistic, and Professor Lazarus is concerned to show that Jewish ethics is equally universalistic, but does not this necessitate some explanation why any ethics can be called Jewish at all ? The immorality of theft or murder is recognized by the Samoan islanders with quite as much stringency as the most advanced European. Hospitality, respect for parents, and most of the minor moralities, are recognized by savages and Moslems, by Buddhists and Agnostics, as much as by Jews or Christians. In what sense, then, can we speak of a Jewish or, for the matter of that, a Christian ethics ? Jews complain that Christians are apt to arrogate to themselves the monopoly of the virtues, to speak of "Christian" charity and the like, with the implied exclusion of Jews and Turks, infidels and Pagans, from the realm of duty. It seems at first sight inconsistent that they themselves—or such a distinguished representative of them as Professor Lazarus—should in their turn claim a distinctive division in the Kingdom of the Good. Professor Lazarus's treatment tends to bring this initial difficulty into prominence, since what he is chiefly concerned to prove throughout the first volume has been the exact fulfilment by Jewish ethics of all the formal requirements of Kantian or abstract ethics. Jewish morality, he seems to argue, is as autonomous, as categorical, as internal and free, as Christian ethics. Why then discriminate between the two ? might be the retort of the enemy within or without the gate. Professor Lazarus would doubtless have his answer to all this, and even his whole book is implicitly an answer, but it would have been desirable to have discussed the Christian formula, since it is raised by the very subject matter of his treatise. My own answer, however, has been that while Jewish ethics recognizes each fundamental principle of general ethics with as much force as any other system, it differs in the stress it lays upon various items, and differs still more in the

connexion it makes between the various principles, while in certain directions it adds certain bonds of union which other systems either repudiate or do not recognize at all. Thus, to take one example, the conception of Morality as Law, as I call it, or Ethicality as Legality, in Professor Lazarus's phrase, is a conception repudiated by Pauline Christianity, and yet interpenetrates the whole of Jewish life and morality. It is because Professor Lazarus's treatise brings out into due prominence these combining principles which weld together the elements of morality into a definitely Jewish system, that I regard it as of such importance in the history of Jewish speculation.

JOSEPH JACOBS.

DICTIONARY OF THE BIBLE.

Dictionary of the Bible. Edited by JAMES HASTINGS. Vol. II.
Feign—Kinsman. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1899.

THE second volume of the Edinburgh *Dictionary of the Bible* carries on to the beginning of the letter K the same principles displayed in the first volume, and already commented upon in these pages. As before, special, and it would seem unnecessary, attention is paid to the English terminology of the Authorized Version. No Jewish names appear in the very extensive list of contributors, and Jewish scholarship is but slightly represented in the Bibliography in the treatment of the *Realien*, where it might be thought no sectarian influences need be feared. On the other hand, there seems to be less tendency to present what I called "minced manual" to the student; and the articles on the Hexateuch, Isaiah, and Jeremiah, are by no means so statistical as that on Exodus, though Genesis and Kings are filled with lists, the exact object and value of which it is somewhat difficult to see. The volume is distinguished, owing to the eccentricities of alphabetical arrangement, by an exceptional number of articles on the archaeology of the Old Testament: Food, Garden, Gate, Glass, Hair, Headband, Hunting, Hospitality, Jewel, and King, fall within the limits of the volume, and go over a large section of Old Testament life. It would be impertinence for any one person to profess to criticize contributions to the whole field of theology by some of the most distinguished theologians of the day. I will content myself, as on a previous occasion, with pointing to a few cases where Jewish research and Jewish conceptions are not